# Are Infants Guilty Before God?

*A Doctrinal Discussion*

*by*
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# ARE INFANTS GUILTY BEFORE GOD?

## A Doctrinal Controversy

For some months already there has been controversy in the Reformed Church in America on the doctrine of original sin. Not only is this controversy an interesting one, but it concerns a matter of no little importance. The debate now in progress is bidding fair to acquire historical significance. Accordingly, it has attracted attention far beyond the bounds of the denomination in which it originated. The liberal *Presbyterian Tribune,* the fundamentalist *Sunday School Times,* the Christian Reformed *Wachter,* as well as the *Presbyterian Guardian,* have commented on it. Likely still other religious periodicals have. That is as it should be. It has been intimated that the present controversy is the sole concern of the Reformed Church in America, but that suggestion may not go unchallenged. Not any one denomination, but the church universal, is custodian of God's revealed truth. As pillar and ground of the truth, the church universal has the task of upholding the truth. The fortunes of Christian doctrine in one Christian church should be of vital concern to every other Christian church. In these days of so much false ecumenicalism this demand of true ecumenicalism may well be stressed. And how refreshing it is, when doctrine has long been contemned,

as in our day, to witness widespread interest in a doctrinal controversy. It actually seems that the churches are becoming "fed up" on the trite and obviously false antithesis that Christianity is not a doctrine but a life.

Dr. E. F. Romig, president of the 1940 General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, in an address delivered at the 1941 General Synod, emphatically denied the guilt of infants, apart from the grace of God. When certain ministers in the denomination expressed grave concern, Dr. Romig explained his position more fully in an "affirmation" spread on several numbers of the denominational weekly, the *Intelligencer-Leader.* In his affirmation Dr. Romig asserted that infants are indeed inclined to evil because of their descent from Adam, but he made a twofold denial of their guilt. He denied that infants are guilty because of the imputation to them of the guilt of Adam's first sin. He also denied that they are guilty because of their own sinfulness. In a word, he denied the guilt of infants outright. As might have been expected, the debate went on.

Recently there has been a significant development. Three articles entitled "Talks on Our Problem" by Dr. Winfield Burggraaff, the able pastor of a Reformed church on Staten Island, New York, have appeared in the *Intelligencer-Leader.* These contributions have many commendable features. They hew to the line. They excel in frankness. At almost every point they are unmistakably clear. And they show not a trace of rancor. That makes them deserving of careful and respectful consideration.

## Some Presuppositions

Dr. Burggraaff begins by laying down a number of presuppositions. With most of them every adherent of the Reformed faith will find himself in agreement. That the infallibility of the Scriptures does not carry over to the creeds of the church and that, therefore, the members of the church have the right to present to the church through proper channels objections to creedal statements; that the creeds do not give an exhaustive statement of the contents of Holy Writ and so leave room within the church for differences of opinion on a number of subjects; that the writings of theologians may not be identified, nor even placed on a par, with the dogmas of the church as formulated in the creeds—these propositions may well be called truisms. It does not follow that their statement is superfluous. These truisms, like many others, can well bear repetition.

It must be recorded, however, that the distinction between theology and dogma is drawn too sharply. After all, dogma is theology, and the works of theologians contain much dogma. The famous Dutch theologian Bavinck, for instance, made no mistake when he entitled his great work, "Gereformeerde Dogmatiek." Dr. Burggraaff's sentence, "The theologians make their appeal to philosophy, science, etc.; the creeds make their appeal to Scripture" does serious injustice to theology. It too appeals before and above all else to Scripture. It follows that in the present discussion on original sin quotations from the standard works of Reformed theology, while not having the same weight as quotations from

the confessions, yet are by no means out of place. No doubt, Dr. Burggraaff will grant that, for he himself quotes Bavinck. The church's theologians, it may not be forgotten, have expert knowledge of the church's creeds and aim in the main to set these forth. And surely, if all Reformed theologians of note should agree on a given point of doctrine, that fact ought to carry great weight for a Reformed church.

The statement of one matter in this connection gives rise to a serious question. It is the plea for the Christian's right to appeal "from the creeds to the Bible or to Christian experience." It is difficult to escape the impression that Christian experience is here regarded as a second source of doctrine alongside of the Bible. To be sure, the reference is to "genuine and general Christian experience," but even so experience may not be coordinated with Holy Writ. Sorry to say, the same impression is given by the appeal to "the utter impossibility of the human mind to conceive of" guilt apart from wilful disobedience, the declaration that "we cannot, by any stretch of the mind, consider that they (infants) are guilty," and the verdict that "our whole being gives . . . the lie" to the contention of theologians that the capacity for sin is itself a cause for guilt. One cannot suppress the fear that Dr. Burggraaff has begun to succumb to that humanist error which lies at the root of present-day liberal theology—the exaltation of subjective experience to the detriment of the absoluteness of God's objective revelation in Holy Scripture as the rule of faith. Christian experience may, and often does, corroborate Christian doctrine, but it is not another

rule of faith beside the Bible. The present issue in the Reformed Church in America will have to be settled not by reference to what the human mind—or for that matter the Christian mind — can conceive of, but by reference to the Word of God.

## Emphatic Denial

Dr. Burggraaff denies what theology calls "imputed guilt." In so doing he does not distinguish sharply between the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first transgression to his descendants and the guilt of infants because of their own inherent corruption. He denies one as well as the other. Like Dr. Romig, he denies infant guilt completely and emphatically. Says he: "The Bible nowhere holds anyone to account for the sin of Adam. If Adam's guilt is imputed to me, then I am guilty with him for the same thing; and the Bible never anywhere says that I was in Eden, or that I ate of the forbidden tree. The Bible gives no other value to the relation between the sin of mankind and Adam's sin other (sic) than to say that we are the children of Adam, and his corrupted nature is ours." He speaks of "the utter impossibility of the human mind to conceive of guilt without first positing law, and violation of law, which requires wilful and knowing disobedience." "The child," we are told, "is outside of the kingdom until God in His grace bring him inside; he is sick in sin and dead, too, until God makes him alive,—but he is not guilty until he has violated the law of God." The logical conclusion is drawn that "baptism is the bath of regeneration, the symbol of cleansing, and the idea of

guilt does not enter into the concept of baptism." In view of this unmistakable denial it becomes impossible to understand Dr. Burggraaff's statement that "the depravity of human nature today is God's punishment (part of it) upon the offspring of Adam for Adam's Original Sin." Certainly, it may be taken for granted that the just God would not punish all men for Adam's first sin if He did not hold them guilty with Adam of this sin. Here is a strange inconsistency. But this inconsistency does not make the denial of infant guilt any the less emphatic.

## Scripture on Infant Guilt

It is Dr. Burggraaff's contention that Holy Scripture does not teach that infants, apart from the grace of God, are guilty. Of the Scripture passages which are most commonly adduced to prove infant guilt he selects two for brief consideration.

It cannot be denied that he has a point in reference to the 14th verse of Romans 5. It is not at all clear that the clause "that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" refers directly to infants. The reference may very well be to all the generations of men between Adam and Moses which, though the law of God was written in their consciences, yet did not possess as explicit a divine commandment as was given to Adam in the garden, and therefore, when they sinned, did not sin in the same manner as did Adam. In fact, it is altogether likely that the latter interpretation is correct. However, it does not follow that this verse does not teach the guilt of infants by implication.

Calvin's comment is highly significant. He too fails to find here a direct reference to children, yet he holds that in those "that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" infants are included. Says this eminently sane exegete: "Although this place be commonly understood of infants, who, not being guilty of any actual sin, die through original corruption; yet had I rather expound it generally of all those who sinned without law. . . . They, therefore, sinned not after the similitude of the transgression of Adam; because they had not, as he had, the will of God revealed by a certain oracle. For God had forbidden Adam to touch the fruit of knowledge of good and evil; but to these he gave no commandment beside the witness of their conscience. The meaning, then, of the apostle is secretly to insinuate, that through this diversity between Adam and his posterity, it cometh not to pass that they are exempted from condemnation. In the meanwhile, under the universal catalogue, infants are also comprehended."

Romans 5: 12-19, the larger passage of which the 14th verse is a part, teaches the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first transgression to all his descendants, including infants. One of its emphatic declarations is that "by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." It is meaningful that Dr. Bavinck, who, incidentally, also does not see in the 14th verse a direct reference to children, sums up the teaching of this passage in part as follows: "On the one transgression of Adam God has pronounced judgment, consisting of declaration of guilt and condemnation to death. This verdict is pronounced in Adam upon

all men because in some way or another, which Paul does not explain more fully here but leaves to be inferred from his contextual reasoning, they were included in Adam; all are declared guilty in Adam and condemned to death"—*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,* 1910 edition, vol. III, p.70.

Even if due allowance is made—as has to be done—for the limitation of space, it must still be said that Dr. Burggraaff's treatment of Ephesians 2:3 is slight indeed. Of course, the expression "children of wrath" should not "send" our "thoughts off immediately to think of . . . cradles." Most certainly, the word "children" is not interchangeable here with "infants." But what earnest student of Scripture ever said it was? Paul declares that all men are "by nature the children of wrath." What else can this mean but that all men in their natural condition, that is, without the grace of regeneration, are in a state of sin and judgment, the objects of divine wrath? And that is just as true of infants as of adults. In brief, Ephesians 2:3 teaches in pointed and strong language the guilt of all men, infants as well as adults, and adults as well as infants, apart from the grace of God. In the words of Bavinck, the natural condition of men which Paul describes here "rests in their very existence"—*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,* vol. III, p. 64.

## The Confessions on Infant Guilt

Dr. Burggraaff insists that the confessions of his church—the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort—"witness to the truth that

what we have inherited from Adam is our sinful nature, the perverted personality, the inclination to every manner of evil, and not an imputed guilt." That these confessions do indeed strongly stress inherited depravity is a matter of common consent. The present controversy makes it necessary to look into the question whether they teach also the guilt of infants.

The Heidelberg Catechism deals very briefly with the doctrine of original sin. Question 5 tells us that man is prone by nature to hate God and his neighbor. Then question 7 asks: "Whence proceeds this depravity of human nature?" The answer is: "From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise; hence our nature is become so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin." Obviously, no mention is made here of infant guilt. It is significant, however, that Zacharias Ursinus, one of the authors of the Catechism, in his famous explanation of this confession, makes much of the guilt of infants. Admittedly, this explanation is not binding on the ministers of the Reformed Church in America, yet its value for a proper understanding of the Catechism can hardly be overestimated. In his discussion of question 7 Ursinus says: "Original sin then includes two things: being guilty of eternal damnation because of the fall of our ancestors, and the corruption of the whole human nature after the fall"; and "Through the death of Christ, who is the second Adam, a double grace has come to us: justification and regeneration. Therefore, also, a double evil has come to us from the first Adam: guilt and corruption of nature." He goes on to say that "all men be-

cause of their corruption are guilty of God's eternal wrath." It is perfectly clear that Ursinus teaches both that all men are born in a state of guilt because of man's first sin and that all men are guilty before God at birth because of the corruption of their nature. This teaching of Ursinus lends considerable warrant to the inference that the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism on original sin presupposes the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his descendants and implies the guilt of all men because of their innate depravity.

In another connection no room whatever is left for doubt as to whether the Catechism teaches infant guilt. The answer to question 70 flatly contradicts the contention that "the idea of guilt does not enter into the concept of baptism." The question is asked: "What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?" And the answer reads: "It is to receive of God the remission of sins freely, for the sake of Christ's blood, which He shed for us by His sacrifice upon the cross, and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ; that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives." That "remission of sins" presupposes guilt admits of no dispute.

Chapter XV of the Belgic Confession deals with original sin. It stresses the "corruption of the whole nature . . . wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother's womb," and describes this corruption as "so vile and abominable in the sight of God, that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind." All mankind, then, is deserving of condemnation because of

innate depravity. But it does not follow that all men will actually be damned. That is stated in the sentence: "Notwithstanding, it is not imputed to the children of God unto condemnation, but by His grace and mercy is forgiven them." However, even here it is plainly taught that all men, the children of God included, are in need of forgiveness. It is clear that according to the Belgic Confession all human beings are, because of innate corruption, in need of forgiveness and worthy of condemnation. But that is an emphatic mode of saying that they are guilty before God. Differently expressed, this confession teaches that innate depravity is imputed —that is, reckoned or charged—by God to all men unto guilt, although not to all men unto damnation. The guilt of infants could hardly be taught more clearly.

The Canons of Dort are vigorous as well as lucid in their teaching of infant guilt. This is as might be expected, in view of the fact that they were drawn up in opposition to the Arminianism of that day, which denied the guilt of infants. Article I of the First Head of Doctrine reads: "As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are obnoxious to eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the Apostle, (Rom. 3:19) 'that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God': (v. 23) 'for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God': and (6:23) 'for the wages of sin is death.' " What else can this mean but that the sin which Adam

committed in the garden was the sin of all men and the guilt which he incurred by that sin is the guilt of all his descendants? But that very truth is expressed by the term "imputed guilt." In Article III of the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine it is taught that "all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath." What does this mean if not that all men are the objects of divine wrath because of their innate depravity?

The fact that the Reformed Church in America has not included in its doctrinal standards the so-called "Rejection of Errors" does not render that part of the Canons irrelevant to the present discussion, for it sheds valuable light on the meaning of the positive statements of the Canons. Therefore the following quotation is in order: "The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those who teach: That it cannot properly be said that original sin in itself suffices to condemn the whole human race or to deserve temporal and eternal punishment. For these contradict the Apostle, who declares: (Rom. 5:12) 'Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned': (v. 16) 'the judgment came of one unto condemnation': and (6:23) 'the wages of sin is death' " — Paragraph 1 under the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine. If the self-evident fact be remembered that infants are members of "the whole human race," it cannot be denied that the fathers of Dort here reject as error the very teaching of Dr. Romig and Dr. Burggraaff. Differently expressed, these brethren em-

phatically deny what the fathers of Dort emphatically affirm.

The conclusion is inescapable that, even though the doctrinal standards of the Reformed Church in America do not employ the precise term "imputed guilt," they yet witness unmistakably, not only to infant depravity, but also to infant guilt. They teach that Adam's first transgression rendered his descendants, as well as Adam himself, guilty before God. And they teach that God imputes innate depravity to all men unto guilt.

## A Grave Error

Apparently Dr. Burggraaff is unwilling to admit that his denial of infant guilt is a serious departure from traditional Reformed doctrine. He ventures to prophesy that "as long as the Reformed Church exists upon this planet, no one of its ministers or professors of theology who is, as the legal term puts it, of sound mind, will ever be carried so far away from a knowledge of his own heart and life, and the life of the world all about him, as to deny what in theology is known as the doctrine of Original Sin." That is a way of asserting that it goes wholly without saying that he adheres to "what in theology is known as the doctrine of Original Sin." A similar claim was made by Dr. Romig for himself. But this language is misleading, to say the very least. Dr. Romig and Dr. Burggraaff do indeed hold to *a* doctrine of original sin, but it is far from indentical with the historic Reformed doctrine of original sin. For of the latter the teaching of infant guilt is an integral part.

Dr. Burggraaff speaks of Professor Herman Bavinck

as his "favorite theologian" and tells his readers that Bavinck "more than once advises extreme caution in any discussion on the doctrine of sin." "The origin of evil," Bavinck is quoted as saying, "is, after the problem of the origin of being, the greatest riddle of life and the heaviest cross of the mind." But this quotation is not pertinent. It concerns the problem of the *origin* of evil. The doctrine of original sin, however, deals with what Bavinck calls the *spread* (verbreiding) of sin. The teaching of God's Word on the latter of these subjects is far fuller than its teaching on the former. It is highly significant that Bavinck, who was indeed a most cautious theologian and willingly admitted that also the doctrine of original sin presents difficulties, yet waxed very bold in his insistence on the guilt of infants. Of the view that original sin is sin, but not guilt, he said: "This is . . . impossible. Sin and guilt are indissolubly united" — *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,* vol. III, p. 78. And the proposition "that every man is born under guilt" he described as an "undeniable truth"—p. 90.

The denial of infant guilt is an ancient one. Pelagius denied both the depravity and the guilt of infants. The Semipelagian position, of which Bavinck says that it was not much better at bottom than the Pelagian (p.78), was that either innate corruption is not actually sin or, if it is sin, it surely is not guilt. Dutch Arminianism, which was condemned by the Synod of Dort, also denied that original sin entails guilt. In passing it may be remarked that Wesleyan Arminianism does teach infant guilt. Those present-day liberals who consent to innate depravity yet hold that none may be adjudged

guilty who has not sinned volitionally. Reformed theologians, on the other hand, have always upheld the doctrine of infant guilt. Even when they differed among each other on some aspect or another of the doctrine of original sin, they were in perfect agreement on infant guilt as a fact. How sad that age-old heresies keep raising their heads and that doctrinal battles fought and won must be fought over again! How much more theological progress churches would make if each succeeding generation, having learned the lessons of history, would stand on the shoulders of the preceding, and not undermine the solid footing which was so laboriously gained!

The gravity of the error under discussion appears most clearly in the light of its logical consequences. Dr. Burggraaff not only says that infants are not guilty as a matter of fact, but he denies the very *possibility* of their being guilty. He "cannot, by any stretch of the mind, consider that they are guilty." His "whole being gives it the lie." He insists that there can be no guilt without "violation of law, which requires wilful and knowing disobedience." In a word, it is his position that the guilt of one *cannot* be imputed to another; that guilt, by virtue of its very nature, is *incapable* of being imputed. Now that position is fraught with consequences which are serious in the extreme. If there can be no such thing as imputed guilt, then it follows, not only that the guilt of Adam's first transgression was not imputed to his descendants, but also that the guilt of sinners was not imputed to Christ. The second of these conclusions is just as inescapable as the former. Again, if guilt is not imputable, it must follow by all the rules

of logic that righteousness is not imputable either. And that means that the righteousness of Christ could not possibly be imputed to believers. But thus the orthodox interpretation of the atonement goes completely by the board. The atonement is no longer vicarious in the historic sense of that term. It is no longer true that Christ wrought salvation for sinners by assuming and paying for them the penalty of death and by rendering to God in their stead that perfect obedience the reward of which is eternal life. The precious belief that Christ in sinners' stead and in their behalf satisfied all the demands of divine justice by His passive and active obedience must be abandoned as an untenable theory. The scriptural teaching that "God laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6), that Christ came "to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28), that he who knew no sin was made sin for us (II Cor. 5:21), that "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13), and that "through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19), will have to be subjected to a most radical re-interpretation or completely abandoned.

Far be it from the present writer to assert, or even to intimate, that either Dr. Romig or Dr. Burggraaff has rejected the orthodox view of the atonement. But that they have taken a step—a most significant one—in that direction admits of no doubt. The doctrine of infant guilt and the doctrine of vicarious atonement are inseparable. The two must ultimately stand or fall together. It was no accident that, when the Dutch

Arminians, and later on the New England Arminians, denied the guilt of infants, they also turned from the doctrine that Christ's death is a vicarious sacrifice for the expiation of sin by the satisfaction of divine justice.

In other words, the denial of infant guilt does irreparable damage to what has come to be denominated the covenant theology. If the guilt of the first Adam, as head of the covenant of works, could not be imputed to his descendants, then neither can the merits of Christ, the last Adam, as head of the covenant of grace, be imputed to believers. But thus it appears that the denial under consideration strikes at the very heart, not only of the Reformed doctrine of original sin, but of the entire system of truth known as the Reformed faith. And this system, it must ever be borne in mind, is derived from the very Word of God.

In still other words, *in the present controversy nothing less is at stake than the very heart of the gospel of the saving grace of God.* For that reason this writer must decline to hold his peace. The issue is of supreme importance.

## Theological Retrogression

Extremely sad to say, there are indications in Dr. Burggraaff's articles that his conception of the atonement has already begun to weaken. That appears, not in his emphasis as such on the ethical aspect of salvation, for it can hardly be overemphasized, but in the fact that he stresses this aspect of salvation *at the expense of its forensic aspect.* He finds that "the idea of

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imputed guilt is due to an effort to discuss the doctrine of sin almost entirely in judicial terms and concepts." But, pray, what Reformed theologian of any note has ever been guilty of such unbalance? Dr. Burggraaff goes on to say: "If in the minds of the writers of the New Testament the idea of 'imputed guilt' has (sic) been a most necessary link in their chain of explaining the mind of God, then the leading concept of their Gospel would have been JUSTIFICATION. And this is not so. Our Lord Himself speaks in terms of regeneration, being born again; He speaks of giving living water that shall forever quench the thirst of the soul; Paul speaks of reconciliation as much as of justification; The Acts speaks of conversion. Even here the teaching of Jesus takes priority, and His teaching is good warrant for not making the idea of 'imputed guilt' a cardinal point of doctrine in the Christian Church." One can hardly help asking what may be meant here by the "priority" of Jesus' teaching. If it is meant that Jesus' teaching takes priority over that of the church, there is no room for dispute. If it should be meant that Jesus' teaching is more normative than that of Paul, for instance, the orthodox Christian would have to demur. But, that aside, why should anyone thus place the forensic and the ethical benefits of salvation over against each other? Wholly of course, both require tremendous emphasis. Then why stress the latter at the expense of the former? The effect is a belittling of the atonement as a forensic transaction, a work of the Redeemer for the perfect satisfaction of divine justice. But precisely on that the historic Christian

church has been extremely insistent and has laid all possible emphasis.

One clause especially in the quotation just given may well cause alarm. Says Dr. Burggraaff: "Paul speaks of reconciliation as much as of justification." In the context he contrasts the ethical benefits of salvation with the forensic. That makes it clear that he regards reconciliation as primarily, if not exclusively, an ethical benefit. But that very view was taken by those New England theologians who prepared the way for the acceptance in this country of extremely faulty theories of the atonement. It need not be held that the concept "reconciliation," as used in the New Testament, never includes the idea of a change in the sinner, a removal of his enmity toward God. Nevertheless Charles Hodge's conclusion must stand: "It is impossible, therefore, that the reconciliation of which the Apostles speak as effected by the cross or death of Christ, should, in its primary and main aspect, be a subjective change in us from enmity to the love of God. It is such a reconciliation which enables Him to pardon and save sinners, and which they are called upon most gratefully to embrace"—*Systematic Theology,* vol. II, p. 515. Briefly put, "reconciliation" designates primarily and chiefly the forensic aspect of salvation.

Since writing his valuable dissertation in 1928 on *The Rise and Development of Liberal Theology in America* Dr. Burggraaff has changed theologically. Then he strongly stressed not only the ethical aspect of sin and salvation, but also their forensic aspect, and maintained a commendable balance of the two. Then he

found serious fault with the liberals of the day for their "failure to recognize the forensic nature of sin" and he called this failure "the crux of the problem concerning which we as orthodox and liberal Christians can never agree" (p. 190). Then he wrote: "Sin is transgression. Not that this is the only characteristic of sin, for sin reveals itself not only in the sense of guilt which is common in all mankind; but also in the stain of sin which marks our every action, and the power of sin from which we are never entirely free. Liberal theology will speak of sin as a stain and a power, but it systematically avoids the other. And it is to this that the Christian religion has always directed its first attention. Sin is transgression and brings on guilt. The whole world is guilty before God. Rom. 3:19" (p. 198). Then he insisted: "Scripture teaches that the life and death of Christ satisfy the justice of God, and that thus, on the basis of Christ's finished work, we are justified; and this justification is primarily a forensic idea,—it effects (sic) our objective relation to the Living God. It removes the guilt. But Christ is not only our justification. He is also our sanctification. This is the result of the justification. The first is primarily forensic, the second is primarily ethical. But He is also our redemption, our Redeemer from sin and death and hell. This is a dynamic conception. The idea of justification, however, is at the base of the whole matter" (p. 208). Today his emphasis is far different not only, but he boldly denies the inseparable connection of sin and guilt.

Needless to say, theological change is in itself not at all reprehensible. Every individual, as well as every church, should keep changing. As a well-known adage has it, "A Reformed church must keep on reforming." So must every Reformed person. A static theology is not a sign of health. However, change should be progress, not retrogression. In this instance, change is retrogression, for Dr. Burggraaff has moved in the direction of liberalism. And liberalism is not an improvement on historic Christianity, but a denial of it.

It is clear that in the present controversy lines are being drawn more and more sharply. May the Reformed Church in America hew straight to the line of its doctrinal standards, and, above all else, of God's own Word. And if the brethren concerned should retrace their steps and return all the way to the historic Reformed faith, that would be cause for great rejoicing among all who love that faith, not only within the Reformed Church in America, but far beyond.

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